

HSC Paper 1 Area of Study Reading Task

The Reading Task in Section 1 of Paper 1 features texts that have been chosen because of their connection with the notion of belonging. Your challenge in this section of the paper is to uncover the overarching concept related to belonging and analyse how language and visual features have been used to convey this concept.

The HSC rubric outlines how you will be assessed:

In your answer you will be assessed on how well you:

- Demonstrate understanding of how the concept of 'Belonging' is shaped in and through texts.
- Describe, explain and analyse the relationship between language, text and context.

To discover the concept you need to consider:

1. The questions being asked for each section of the paper. Each question will build on this concept; especially in the Section 2 writing task.
2. When you read and view the extracts in Section 1, take note of the emotive words and the salient images and words that demand attention.

When you respond to the questions, take note of the following:

1. **IDENTIFY** language feature, **EXEMPLIFY**, **EXPLAIN** and **EXTRAPOLATE** by discussing the meaning conveyed by the language features and textual details about belonging and what impact it has on the responder.
2. Make sure you know the features of various forms of text so that you can comment on how the form of the text may be appropriate to the content.
3. The composer's purpose will influence his or her choice of text, tone, language, form, structure and style.

The Notes from the HSC Marking Centres have relayed the following observations about student responses to this section of Paper 1:

- *"Strong responses demonstrated perception and insight into the **ideas** embedded in the texts and supported a thesis with effective **textual evidence**."*
- *"Weaker responses simply described the content of either the written or visual without linking them."*
- *"A discussion which focused primarily on language techniques often restricted the candidates' opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of the ideas in the texts or to develop their ideas effectively."*

The final question is the most challenging. It is always worth the most marks and the questions could be:

- **Evaluative** (*In your opinion, which text was most effective in conveying an idea about belonging?*)
- **Comparative** (*How did two of the texts convey different ideas about belonging?*)
- **Conceptual** (*How did two of the texts reflect the importance of landscape to belonging?*)

You need to write comprehensively (a page at the very minimum – two pages desirable), and discuss the form and features of the texts supported by detailed textual references. It is like a min-synthesis essay! If you are asked to evaluate which text you consider to be the most effective, you must analyse the texts you have rejected as well as the text you have chosen. You could use the following scaffold:

1. In the first sentence or two introduce your thesis that is connected to the overarching concept related to belonging explored by the texts.
2. Then launch into an analysis of the first text. Focus on the ideas first and then the language features that conveyed the meaning. You do not need lengthy quotes.
3. Compare and contrast the texts analysed in relation to how they approach the concept of belonging.
4. End with an evaluative statement that links back to your thesis

AOS Revision - Belonging



The Area of Study requires you to have a strong conceptual understanding of how belonging is represented and conveyed in and through texts. To appreciate what you must know and how you are expected to apply your understanding of belonging you need to analyse closely the rubrics from the *Stage 6 English Syllabus* and the *Prescriptions: Area of Study Electives and Texts Higher School Certificate 2009-2012* document. Your HSC examination questions are framed by the rubrics! The key facets of the rubrics are **Representation, Perceptions and Context**, and **Interrelationships**.

Reading Task Section 1

The Feedback from the Marking Centre noted:

- *Strong responses demonstrated perception and insight into the ideas embedded in the texts and supported a thesis with effective textual evidence.”*
- *“Weaker responses simply described the content of either the written or visual without linking them”*
- *“A discussion which focused primarily on language techniques often restricted the candidates’ opportunity to demonstrate their understanding of the ideas in the texts or to develop their ideas effectively”*

When discussing textual features you should:

- i. Identify the **technique**
- ii. **Illustrate** with techniques
- iii. **Explain** how the technique/s is representing
- iv. **Stretch** by discussing the effect on the composer and why the composer used the feature.

For questions on individual texts:

- Make sure you know the features of various forms of texts.
- Closely analyse the features of a visual. E.g. Positioning, composition, framing, contrast, lighting, point of view, gaze, body language, apparel, vectors, colour, symbolism, etc.

Last Question in Reading Task

- **Concept driven**
- **Topic sentence** that introduces **thesis** or line of argument related to belonging in response to question.
- First **idea** that supports the thesis explained through an **analysis** of the first text and its language features.
- Can **compare or contrast** through a link to the second text.
- Second idea that furthers the thesis through an analysis of the second text and its language features.
- Continue to compare and contrast.
- End with an **evaluative** statement

Revision Questions

In your answer you will be assessed on how well you:

- demonstrate understanding of the way perceptions of belonging are shaped in and through texts
- describe, explain and analyse the relationship between language, text and context

Question 1

When I was growing up around here, that place had been
just another small town off the highway,
with mothy streetlights, a motel's insomnia,
tree roots under the pavement blocks,
broken fences and long yards, white fibro
beyond the tree's broad shadows,
bougainvilleas, weatherboards.
Now there were split-level Spanish houses
in an estate across the hillslopes. There was the first
tall block of flats. Tourists were driving
to the beach, along the new road; and out there, you found,
was also getting freckled over.
Now the cars and motorbikes were everywhere,
their tyre-marks drawn about the sand
like great tangled ropes – so that people might seem
a lynch mob, threatening everything that's natural.

- What is Gray's attitude towards the notion of belonging? I mark
- Justify your decision by referring to three language features. 3 marks

Question 2



- What assumption has been made about living in the suburbs by Jeannie Baker? 1 mark

- d. What is being said about belonging? 1 mark
- e. Identify four visual features that represent the notion of belonging to family and place. 4 marks

Question 3

Extract from *Cats, Cradles and Chamomile Tea* by Anna Maria Dell'oso

Every few weeks for several years, I drove over 600 kilometres from Sydney to Armidale. I made the journey for love: my dearest person was at the University of New England. Up the Pacific Highway, through the Hunter Valley, on to the hard, flat mining towns in recession, climbing steadily upwards past Tamworth, where country guitars would complain on the radio, to the chill of the New England plateau, the high country where the temperature would drop and the wind nip through the window.

Through seven hours of solitary driving, the weary cafes, road-houses, town halls and pubs become totems. There you get out of your capsule to be plunged into a different reality. This is the lonely sweet romance of the road.

Late one rainy night, tired to my bones, I stopped in a mining town. The only vacant room was at a miner's hotel. Down in the bar the blokes bought me a nip of rum as I dried out. They collected twenty cent pieces 'to ring the boyfriend, love – he'll be worried about ya'. Theirs was a hard labouring life but their gentlemanly warmth made it a six-star hotel for me.

There is a human spirit, weirdly Australian, on the highways. There is also an inhuman one. I have driven heart-in-mouth as the fog descends, the car splutters and simple bends rear up too fast. Tall gums reach out, their leaves hiss and mutter. You cling to the reality of the painted lines. But something is singing for you. It's a wild old, old country beyond the highway markers.

- f. What conflicting notion of belonging is presented in this extract? 1 mark
- g. How does the writer represent this conflicting notion of belonging? Discuss two techniques. 2 marks

Question 4 5 marks

Imagine you are editing a book for a broad audience about how Australians feel a sense of belonging, or not belonging.

Which of these four texts would you draw upon in compiling the book? Justify your decisions.

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Section II Writing Task

The Act of Writing – '*A Word dropped careless on a Page...*'

The act of writing for the HSC is a carefully planned attack on the question using powerful language and a skilful structure. The Feedback from the Marking Centre noted that stronger responses:

*"...demonstrated structural complexity, **cohesion**, the use of an authentic, sustained and engaging **voice** and took advantage of the opportunity the question presented to showcase **originality** and **perceptiveness**. The mechanics of language, punctuation, sentence structure and paragraphing were applied **skillfully** in these responses"*

To enrich writing:

- Show don't tell. Avoid too much information and focus on appealing to the senses through effective descriptions. Remember our most powerful tool is our imagination!
- Develop a strong, distinctive voice. To achieve this it is advantageous to write about what you have experienced so that your writing comes from the heart.

- Choose and control your use of a range of language features to engage and influence an audience. Listen to the sound and rhythm of your language and aim for lexical density!
- Plan your structure: the opening and the conclusion – a circular structure can cure a failure to produce a strong conclusion!
- Employ a variety of sentence beginnings and sentence lengths.
- Vary paragraph lengths – don't be afraid to use a single sentence paragraph to make a dramatic statement.
- Use a range of poetic devices
- Create tension and contrast

Setting

- Think about your characters who move in the setting, your key ideas, your purpose and how you are representing your perception of belonging.
- Focus on the craft of writing: imagery, figurative devices, syntax, punctuation and structure.
- Ensure that your readers can 'see' the setting – don't neglect those small details that can capture the essence of a place!

Characters

- Sometimes our most effective writing is based on our lives and our experiences. Think about the people you have met, even yourself and create one or more characters.
- Think about the character/s' perceptions how this perception has been shaped by their context, attitudes, experiences, values, perspectives, etc.
- Consider dialogue and how it can be used to effectively capture and reflect the character/s.
- Incorporate semiotics

Complete the following activities in the allocated time:

1. *Creativity is a place. Memory is an image. The artistic process itself is a journey, a specific one, the return to a lost and cherished childhood realm, the original source of inspiration and identity.*

Compose a text that is inspired by this quote.

Write the first and last paragraph in 10 minutes.

2. Use the painting below as a stimulus for a text about belonging or not belonging.

Write as much as you can in 10 minutes.



Area of Study Section III

The Question:

The question **must** drive and shape your response. Better responses directly engaged with the question using it to shape their thesis. They explored different aspects of the question in relation to their thesis.

Weaker responses presented a prepared response, ignoring the key terms of the question. Alternatively, weaker responses simply repeated the question.

Sustained Thesis:

To compose a skilful integrated response, you **must** present and develop through your evaluation of the texts a strong **thesis or line or argument**. This has been reinforced every year in the *Notes from the Marking Centre*:

*‘Highly developed responses demonstrated an ability to **engage with the question**, enabling students to apply their knowledge and exhibit **engagement with their texts** and the **textual features**. Stronger candidates often answered **conceptually** and/or metaphorically rather than literally... High-range responses used key terms particular to their focus area to create **their own thesis**, and displayed an ability to **evaluate and analyse**. Highly developed responses reflected **a personal engagement** with the question and a flair for the **craft of writing**.*

*Better responses reflected a high degree of **fluency and control of language**, making **perceptive links between their texts**’ (NSW BOS).*

A thesis or line of argument should reflect your perspective and understanding of what you have been studying in relation to the question’s statement regarding the notion of belonging.

It must be used to shape and direct your integrated response and be supported and/or challenged by your prescribed text and texts of own choosing.

Better responses introduced the thesis and explained **why** they had arrived at this insight. They then provided at least two aspects of this line of argument when examining the texts. They used the textual features and details to support their point of view. These responses explored how belonging can be ambivalent and tenuous. They did not simply repeat the concepts of belonging and not belonging.

Weaker responses introduced a limited thesis that was simply repeated as they introduced a new text.

Analysis of the texts:

When providing evidence to support your thesis, you must present a deep and meaningful analysis of the ideas of the texts. Stronger responses evaluated in depth the key details of the prescribed and related texts. Weaker responses provided a superficial overview of the texts.

One of the major aspects of the Area of Study is the act of representation. ie. How composers have used language features to represent the notion of belonging. Therefore, it is essential that when you present an idea related to belonging that you provide support through an analysis of the textual details and the language features that represent these ideas in your prescribed and related texts.

Better responses integrated seamlessly their evaluation of belonging and the analysis of textual features and details. They stated the technique, provided an example and evaluated the meaning being conveyed. Weaker responses presented a shopping list of techniques or referred to a minimum of three techniques per text.

When evaluating a prescribed text, please ensure that you focus on the unique features of that text. If it is a film or a painting, you must privilege visual techniques over language techniques.

Integration:

The thesis should be used to integrate your response as your evaluation of the texts is providing the **supporting evidence** for your **point of view**. It is not an imperative at the Marking Centre that you integrate your texts but it does make for a cohesive and skilful response that perceptively engages with the question.

Stronger responses presented an integrated evaluation of the texts. When they moved to a new text or a different aspect of their thesis, the topic sentence provided a strong link to the previous text and/or the thesis.

Weaker responses provided no connection between the texts or the thesis. Consequently, the exploration of the texts was disconnected and clunky.

Texts of own choosing:

In this section your choice of related text/s is the discriminator. What you choose and how you use the related text/s to support and challenge your thesis is crucial. Avoid using texts that do not allow you to provide in-depth analysis or texts that are too lower order.

The rubric refers to a **text of your own choosing**. You do not want to be using the same text as the rest of your class if you are trying to stand out. You cannot be discriminated against but the related text is the discriminator.

Attempt the following activities in the time allocated:

1. “Not belonging is a far more difficult road to travel than that of belonging”.

How do your prescribed texts and **TWO** other texts of your own choosing explore ideas of belonging and not belonging?

OR

“Belonging is about finding yourself.”

In your study of your prescribed text and at least two texts of own choosing have you found this to be true?

You have 10 minutes to write as much as you can! Focus on the thesis!

2. “Sometimes our experiences can cause us to disconnect from the real world. We can become strangers in a strange land, and no longer belong to the world we live in.”
To what extent is this statement a reflection of the experiences of the individuals you have encountered in your prescribed text and at least two texts of your own choosing?

OR

“What texts reinforce about the notion of belonging is that it is ambiguous and transitory.”

Discuss this statement in relation to your prescribed text and at least two texts of your own choosing.

You have 10 minutes to write a one to two sentence thesis and plan your response.

Resources

To access a range of essay questions visit:

- <http://tutortales.wordpress.com/2009/07/16/practice-questions-for-area-of-study-belonging/#more-196>

To find suggested texts of own choosing visit:

- <http://www.the-chimaera.com/May2008/Theme/Preface.html>
- [http://www.insidebreak.org.au/belonging/
http://hscbelonging.wordpress.com/2009/12/01/belonging-to-a-place/](http://www.insidebreak.org.au/belonging/http://hscbelonging.wordpress.com/2009/12/01/belonging-to-a-place/)